

RollPlay



GM NOTEBOOK  
ISSUE TWENTYTHREE

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# 1

## Hello Patrons!

After the massive-sized issue twenty-two we take a bit of a nostalgic look at a handful of old GM notes in this issue. Four full pages of Swan Song and Mirrorshades scans are accompanied by an updated relationship map for Hong Lu and a dossier for each of the Oddballs characters. Court of Swords is, happily, pushing along on the prep we did last month, but I suspect next time around we'll have a new character sheet or two to show you, as well as some heavenly GM prep. For now, take a trip back to 2015 with me and see what my GM brain was up to!

Thank you so much for your support, and welcome to Issue 23 of the GM's Notebook.

*Adam Koebel  
RollPlay GM*



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# 3.

# FAR VERONA: HONG LU COMPLICATIONS

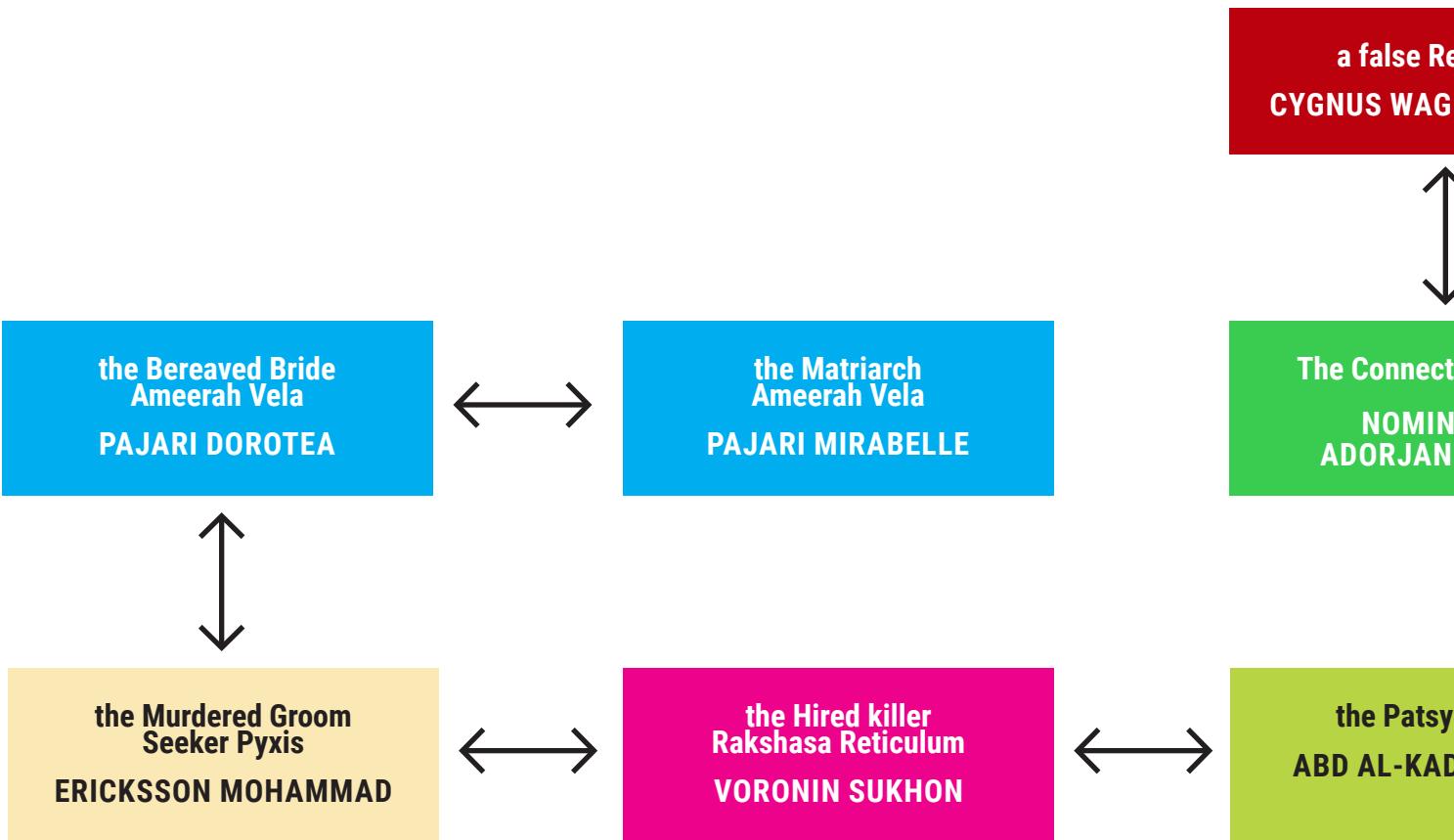


No mission ever survives contact with the PCs. This is as true now as it was in the halcyon days of Greyhawk and Blackmoore. Players will always find ways to complicate and expand on the original concept of any given mission. That's especially true when a game allows not only the GM but the players themselves to bring in new NPCs. Several games, including Burning Wheel, Mouse Guard and Stars Without Number allow the players to explicitly lay out characters that they need to help them accomplish their goals - then they can go to those NPCs for help. What's great about these systems, whether as detailed as Circles or as simple as Connect, is that they help flesh out the world and give the PCs a place in it. Instead of being weird outsider hobo-types, they're connected to friends, family, old

lovers and contacts throughout their setting. As a GM, this sort of mechanism is perfect for expanding on the world and asking questions about the players' characters. I love having the players give me new ways to complicate their lives and I love fleshing out the very human world around them. Mechanisms like this are my favourite.

In the most recent episodes of Far Verona, we've seen a relatively small mission on a dangerous planet take on complexity and danger I didn't exactly expect early on, and much of that has been because of the entanglements of the player characters. I've included her a new, updated map for the hostage rescue mission currently occupying our crew. Like any good relationship map, it's growing by the day...

## 3A Mission Chart Assassinated Future Husband



eticulum  
NER MIRIAM

ed Serpens  
ATOR  
BARNES

↔  
the Nosey Journalist  
Investigator  
AESOP HINES

Captain  
OR STRAND

↔  
local gang color  
“BOSS” AUGUST HO      ↔  
vice sector D boss  
“PROXY PORTAL”

↔  
brash mercenary  
old friend of Booker’s  
RADOVAN

↔  
a loyal lieutenant  
(and cyborg)  
STEELJAW



# CLARENCE BERGMAN

Type: Computer Geek  
Age: 12  
Gender: Boy  
Iconic Item: Calculator Watch  
Anchor: Grandma  
Pride: "I'm the best gamer in school."  
Problem: Bullying  
Drive: Peer pressure to fit in.

Skills:  
Program 1  
Tinker 1  
Calculate 2  
Investigate 3  
Comprehend 3

Body: 1  
Tech: 5  
Heart: 1  
Mind: 5

# EDDIE HILL

Type: Rocker  
Age: 12  
Gender: Boy  
Iconic Item: Black Sabbath T-Shirt  
Anchor: Older Brother  
Pride: "People can rely on me"  
Problem: "My parents are always fighting"  
Drive: "I want to be somebody great"

Skills:  
Force 3  
Move 1  
Tinker 3  
Contact 3

Body: 5  
Tech: 4  
Heart: 2  
Mind: 1

# FERN FISCHER

Type: Hick  
Age: 10  
Gender: Girl  
Iconic Item: Slingshot  
Anchor: Grandma  
Pride: A Green Thumb  
Problem: "My brother vanished in the woods!"  
Drive: "There's more to this world than meets the eye"

Skills:  
Sneak 1  
Move 3  
Tinker 3  
Investigate 1  
Empathize 2

Body: 4  
Tech: 3  
Heart: 1  
Mind: 2

# SAMANTHA PAIGE

Type: Popular Kid  
Age: 13  
Gender: Girl  
Iconic Item: Zippo Lighter  
Anchor: Older Brother  
Pride: All the benefits of being popular  
Problem: Addicted to being popular  
Drive: "Life is so tedious, I need an outlet!"

Skills:  
Tinker 1  
Charm 2  
Lead 3  
Investigate 3  
Comprehend 1

Body: 1  
Tech: 3  
Heart: 5  
Mind: 5

**Selections from  
the GM's Note-  
book, a vintage  
collection of  
Swan Song and  
Mirrorshades  
pages**





As promised, I've scanned several pages of old notes ranging from chaotic scribbles to some fairly detailed mission outlines for the first few arcs of Swan Song and Mirrorshades. It surprises me a little, going back to these notes, just how much detail I put in. Having moved mainly to using online documentation methods (much of my prep is done

live on stream now) I look back at these 8.5" x 11" pages of my tiny scrawl and wonder where I got the time and energy to do so much handwriting. Then I remember I used to have a full time job that afforded me a lot of sitting around in meetings I didn't care to be a part of. One way or another, I'm glad to be able to share my notes with you.



The first page you'll see is a collection of miscellaneous notes for what I think were two fairly close-together episodes of Swan Song and Mirrorshades. A lot of my current notebook looks like these pages - out of context scribbling where I'm counting up or down on things, making single word or short sentence notes less to ever refer to them and more just because the act of writing can often cement a thing in my head. The countdown on the

right side of the page labelled "T-Minus" is how long before the arrival of the Harridan's Heart in Andoni's orbit, for example. In this page I'm particularly pleased by the "exposure to raw drivespace is very very bad for you" note and the "Ossuary = Werner Herzog" notes. I'll do that a lot when I'm thinking about an NPC either for the first time or as an effort to better cement my idea of them. Pick a celebrity or two and spin out from there.



The following page is notes for what I can only think of as the beginning of the rise of Rajani van Dorne. This is what would become a sort of rescue mission from a post-apocalyptic planet (I laughed at my admonishment to myself to "Call on that Apocalypse

World shit" here). This prep is pretty common sandbox style prep for me - i'll think of a handful of things that might happen, let the PCs have their own run of things and then interject as necessary to keep the pace going.



Notes for Episode 16 take a dramatic and ridiculous turn as we're introduced to Lords Lara and Lukas, a married couple of denim-clad, blue chicken owning Asan "nobles" who I think I must have styled after some kind of twisted Nashvillian fever-dream. In red, we see another of my "NPCs

talking about the PCs in a vaguely threatening way while the PCs are off-screen" fan service cutscenes. I love them, they're a delight, and they're such a fun way to create tension for the audience. Sometimes I'm GMing for my players, but I'm always GMing for the fans.



The last page is all Mirror-shades, save for some scribbles down at the bottom. Do not ask me what the enormous pink KICKSTARTER note means (I think it was a reminder to mention the Blades in the Dark kickstarter, but I'll be damned if I can be sure, now.) I've given myself leave to "focus on interpersonal stuff" which, you know, would become a fundamental element of the

game, and to support that, I've made a short list of NPCs to remind me who the key players are. Key players like "Sean Finnegan Grady, a racist-ass motherfucker" because of course he is, it's Shadowrun. Also interesting here is Brando, a decker-slash-christmas tree. The Hotel Maginot makes a first appearance in these notes, though you can see my original name was Mathematique.



## Grand List of SR Hacks:

3:07 - 1:40:07

(4)

7:30

T-Minus:

6:30

~~17:00~~

5:30

11:00

4:30

10:00

3:30

9:00

### 1) Belief, Instinct, Goal

As Torchbearer, earn 1 karma / session for each thing, only if a roll is made

### 2) Circles

As Burning Wheel, ~~XX~~ checks = current level advance it

~~(20)~~

### 3) End of Session

MVP vote, workhorse vote, embodiment vote

[30]

~~(X)~~

~~(X)~~

~~(X)~~

~~(X)~~

- 13 hrs, counting
- ship systems primarily offline
- what's the plan?

Stealth

8 P/S

4/H

~~(X)~~

~~(10)~~

~~(30)~~

Assault  
on Pi

6:00

9:30

9:00

7:00

(10)

Stealth

+1

~~13:30~~

~~13:15~~ ~~13:15~~

msg from  
Seckler

0:00

Sic - ~~HTT~~ ~~HTT~~

Higgs - ~~HTT~~

Piani - ~~(2)~~

Pros - ~~HTT~~

~~111~~

~~(X)~~ 9,8,7

4,3

(240m)

~~13:00~~

✓ maintenance is 3 mos  
+ from overdue  
the 6 of Swords

Pi can hold off the War-  
Mind but not forever

[Exposure to raw drivespace is very very bad for you.] (Mme. Oubliette ~ maltech officer)

## Components of the Haridan's Heart

(III)

~~====~~ = no atmo

~~18:30~~

~~15:30~~

- Docking Bays
- ~~Baracks~~
- Engineering
- The Core

- the Bridge
- Officer's Quarters
- " Mess
- Captain's Quarters

- ~~Blottest~~
- Science
- ~~Astronautics~~
- ~~Armory~~

Fuel Stores

~~17~~

Piani - ~~III~~

Higgs - ~~HTT~~ ~~HTT~~

Sic -

Pros - ~~HTT~~ ~~HTT~~

Robots: CHARLEMAGNE class } standard on ground assault ships  
Drones: KESTROS class }

↳ Chaff, Guns

(1)

carry 3x drones

~~(X)~~ ~~(X)~~

$8 \times 6 = 48$

~~(X)~~ ~~(X)~~

Ossuary - Werner Herzog

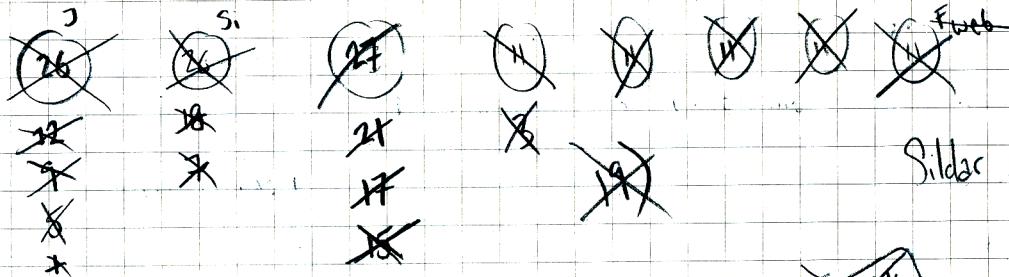
~~(X)~~ ~~(X)~~ -6

~~21~~ ~~1~~  
~~23~~ ~~1~~  
~~23~~ ~~111~~

to shut down the drive, power has to be re-routed, access cut off  
except for external ports.

(Andoni is wrecked)

~~3:15~~



10-15m

Sildar F  
S

1st → 4) II  
2nd → 3) III

1st → 3)  
2nd → 2)

Higgs, Prosper  
Mr. S

40 + 20K

Wu  
45  
40  
37  
35  
27  
24  
20  
17

Cassie,  
Marcus  
Sexius  
Centurion  
Octavius

## Swan Song: Ep 15

1) the ship is flooded with a steady stream of Mayday messages from the planet, people desperate to escape

2) the Swan Song gets an encrypted message from Rajani Van Dorne, requesting evacuation

3) Viktor Kovacs receives a message stating "Cousin. I got the money you sent me, thank you so much. Things have gone so horribly wrong here. I'm safe, for now but I don't know for how long. Please, if you can, come and get me? I'll be at these co-ordinates as long as it is safe."

\* On Andoni \*

- everything is chaos. looting, death, destruction. it's a god-damn Apocalypse. Total infrastructure collapse.

Encounters:

Pay: 300'000 credits

1) Looters / raiders fall on the party looking for food or supplies.

2) Military Police try to arrest or detain / take the Swan Song.

3) Everybody gets radiation sickness

4) Refugees swarm the Swan Song.

5) City collapse, etc. Big dramatic set piece apocalypse shit.

Call on that Apocalypse World shit.

Mustafa makes sure they get paid, but gives + rep if they get Van Dorne off the planet.

Andonian Armed Forces Remnant (Remnant Legion)

• Within a week, all the major powers know that Andoni has been ruined + most have the idea that Pfotenhauser was involved.

• War-Mind (the Heiophant, unseated) vanishes (the Six of Swords attempts to follow)

[Legatus Calpurnia Corvis, leader of the Remnant Legion, badass generalissimus]

## Swan Song, Episode 16

DENIM

- Rajani Van Dorne is on the ship, awaiting a pickup by the Madari Syndicate.
- A significant bounty has been placed on Lord Lukas McCrary by his wife, Lara. Here are the details, as they stand. (Lara = blue hair, pregnant, weird fashion, pet chicken) ROBOT GUARD
- ① Lord Lara is married to Lord Lukas, both are members of the Asa Noble Court, and powerful in their own right.
- ② The law of Asa allows divorce, but heavily favours men in the division of property
- ③ Lara owns several shares, some controlling, in companies on Asa. She would lose these shares if they divorce.
- ④ Lara has recently (last November) joined the Church of the New Prophet, which Lukas is attempting to use to leverage for divorce, grounds of "religiosity"
- ⑤ Lara has decided "fuck it" and wants her husband killed or brought to her

> Lara is on Strophios (ice world, bubble cities, pilgrimage site, T4, millions of people) with her people, spreading the word of the Prophet

> Lukas has a yacht ~ the "Kafkaesque" that he tools around in, he has a home on Asa (the McCrary Estate) and several elsewhere. He might be;

- ① on Cabral, his ancestral home
- ② on Majid, in an opium den
- ③ on Hoveyda, in the hands of the Crystalline Eye, a psionics cult there
- ④ in the hands of the Highbeam Fleet, who took his ship and plan to turn him over themselves

- Rajani will leave the ship in whatever system the PCs first stop in

★ Assassins attack the crew, trying to capture Mr. Sicarian. They're freelancers, like the crew.

### Opener:

- Forward Firebase Geneva, Planet Onintza, 12 July, 3200
- A woman, black hair, stern features, Greek maybe, an ank tattooed under her eye, combat armor on
- She's shouting at 2 screen "What do you mean I'm leaving. They're called Fate's fucking rangers for a reason"
- Is told, by a quiet male voice "this is what is happening. You can't argue. It's an order"
- She turns, points to two soldiers "Get my things, ready the ship. Titan says it's time to hunt."
- Meanwhile, Strophios ...

## Mirrorshades (000)

M2

full throttle → Matrix Sec.  
dude

- ① The cops want to talk to the runners about what happened.
- ② Video footage of the hotel fight hits the Matrix.
- ③ John Jack Grey, the Whale shaman, wants to talk to Breakdown, about his path and about the people he spends time with.
- ④ The Humanis Policlub has one last gambit to pull. Most, if not all of the attackers will eventually be released from prison early.
- ⑤ No attacks on Hadiyah's day off, focus on interpersonal stuff + fallout from the big battle. A chance to breathe.
- ⑥ Hadiyah wants to leave the hotel + asks the runners to pick somewhere. On her day off, she wants to "relax + have fun"

\* the last attack is ~~Friday~~ Sunday, in the barrens. An IED flips the van and one last attack is made (ork gingers help if Maurice's cousin is called)

500/day 100/day/person

### NPCs

- hotel head of security, Carter Madeiros
- Maurice, a limo driver
- Brando, a decker / Xmas tree
- Drew Jones, customs UCAS
- Thomas Aguirar, an ork underground operator
- Kirk, a wage mage
- Sgt. Lupita Serrano, Lone Star (downtown)
- Sean Finnegan Grady, a racist-ass motherfucker
- John-Jack Grey, a whale shaman

[Dome Methuselah]

bounty has fix  
hunter

(upgrade L/S)

[old friend]

James Han  
up-and-coming Mandarin

① Beliefs, Instincts, Goals

② Karma rewards

③ Recap, where are we at?

[Le Hotel Mathematique]

Maginot

(Efram Newton)

bomb threat

pranked

[8]

① Niko date life

80K  
2 weeks

A former cadet  
found religion

power  
200K  
1 mos

Mme Alana Durand

order of  
Annunciation  
grudge against  
Prosper

KICKSTARTER

Piani didn't  
say goodbye,

**THIS PAGE IS MISSING  
THEN WHY DON'T WE MISS IT NOW?  
SO PLEASE IGNORE IT**

